

Report of the Developmental Lead Minister

Rev. Tim Temerson

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Charlottesville

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What a year it has been at the UU Congregation of Charlottesville! We began our shared ministry on August 1, 2022, and I am amazed at all that you have accomplished. A new church sign, celebrating the congregation's 80th anniversary, a record-setting pledge drive, re-launching the religious education program for children and youth, creating a new mission/purpose, completing vital repairs in Summit House, raising and donating over \$40,000 in social action collections, and making your way out of a terrible and isolating pandemic with joy, hope, and a feeling of new beginnings. In fact, if I could somehow summarize this year in a few words, I would simply say that UUCville is beginning again with love and hope. That's what I'm feeling and I look forward to building on that positive energy as we look to a future filled with so much possibility.

One of the great joys of serving the UU Congregation of Charlottesville is the opportunity it affords me to work with such a wonderful professional staff. Rev. Leia Durland-Jones and I have formed a dynamic and creative ministerial partnership. Rev. Leia is smart, wise, incredibly hard-working, and fun! I have learned so much from her, not only about our congregation but about ministry in general. Her thirty years of experience have been invaluable in helping me to understand the recent history of UUCville and the context in which many aspects of congregational life take place...Sean Skally is a true "jack-of-all trades" who can be found handling AV/tech, building, and finance issues on a daily basis. Sean is very hard working and has done a good job overseeing important building projects (especially the HVAC repairs in Summit House), upgrading our tech capabilities, and tracking and managing church finances. One challenge Sean faced when I arrived was being over-committed and I have worked closely with him to scale back those things that are not priorities, thereby giving him more time to focus on church finance... Scott DeVeaux is a talented and dedicated Director of Music who brings so many musical gifts and a deep and abiding passion for Unitarian Universalism and for UUCville. I have especially appreciated Scott's work in bringing the choir back together after the pandemic and in bringing new ideas into our music ministry. I am also very pleased to work closely with both Caroline Heins and Carole McIvor, who are always ready to help with whatever needs to be done and who are both very passionate about our congregation. Finally, a word of thanks to Rachel Buckland, our A/V Tech. Rachel does a fine job handling dual-platform worship and also uploads service recordings to youtube in a timely way.

I can't possibly name all the fabulous lay leaders who give so much of their time and talent to the UU Congregation of Charlottesville. I have been blessed to work alongside a very healthy and dedicated Board of Trustees. Pam McIntire is an amazing president who combines a big picture visionary mind-set with an incredible work ethic and an ability to get things done. Pam has not only led the Board, she has also served on the Mission Task Force and I am so looking forward to working with her as she begins another term as Board president. The remainder of the executive team is equally effective and visionary, and I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Bev Ryan, Hayley Owens, and Kay Frazier. Kay has done an amazing job as Treasurer, and I am so very glad she has decided to serve for a second term. I also want to thank the at-large board members, including Steve Brecker, Renee Brett, Breck Gasting, and Jimmy

Gorham. Steve and Breck are completing their terms on the Board, and we are so very grateful for their service!.

Below are some important aspects of congregational life that I have been involved with since beginning my ministry.

- **Developmental Goals** – My core task as Lead Developmental Minister is to help UUCville achieve the four developmental goals that were established before I arrived. Those goals include 1) helping to create a shared sense of purpose and identity 2) building a more welcoming and inclusive congregation for all 3) cultivating a deeper sense of stewardship as a year-round ministry emphasizing generosity and giving of not just money, but also time and talent 4) improving transparency through better church communication, both within the congregation and in the wider world

While the work to achieve each of these goals is ongoing, I am very pleased with how much we have accomplished in a relatively short time. In terms of the first goal, the Board appointed a task force to develop a new congregational mission. The task force held 17 cottage conversations input and feedback in developing a proposed mission/purpose statement. That proposed statement will be presented to the Board and congregation for adoption. Work on the second goal has mostly involved my working closely with our Membership ministry as we seek to connect with newcomers and help them along a path to membership. We have instituted monthly newcomer circles which I participated in as well as a follow-on New Members and Friends class. The third goal, which is focused on deepening our stewardship ministry took a huge leap when the Board created the Stewardship Steering Committee (SSC). My predecessor, Rev. Linda Olsen-Peebles, proposed creating an SSC and I am so glad Rev. Linda did because the SSC has already played an invaluable role in laying the groundwork for the 2023-24 pledge drive as well as planning for future initiatives like a service/activities fair in the fall and a dedicated program of planned giving. The fourth goal is one that we are also working on and I feel our communications ministry is outstanding. We are blessed with extraordinarily gifted lay leaders/volunteers who maintain a very attractive and continually updated website as well as a solid presence of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

- **Adult Faith Development** – I taught two AFD classes this year – “The Wisdom of Many Faiths” (ten weeks) and “With Head and Heart: The Spiritual Wisdom of Howard Thurman” (five weeks). Each class was held online and had over 30 registrations. I thoroughly enjoyed teaching both and look forward to offering additional AFD classes in the future.
- **Pastoral Care/Visitors** – I attend the meetings of the Pastoral Visitors and work closely with Rev. Leia, Patty Wallens, and Meg Dunham on pastoral care. I am so very pleased that pastoral care is truly a shared ministry at UUCville and I feel it is one of our strongest ministries.
- **Pledge Drive** – The pledge drive set an all-time record of over \$500,000 and also saw over 40 new or returning pledge units. What was especially impressive to me was how well-organized the pledge drive was and how well-integrated messaging and communications were with the overall drive. Hayley Owens and Bob Brett did an amazing job chairing the team and it is clear to me that this congregation has a great pledge drive framework in place. I was happy to play a role

but also felt that the congregation really knows what it's doing when it comes to conducting a pledge drive. Well done, UUCville!

- **Interfaith** – I exchanged pulpits with Pastor Lehman Bates on January 22, preaching the Sunday sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church. I also delivered the benedictory words at the Martin Luther King Interfaith service at Mt. Zion African Baptist Church, also on January 22, and have joined the Charlottesville Clergy Collective. Special mention should be made of Rev. Fritz Hudson, who is a member of the congregation who also serves on the Clergy Collective. Fritz has become an important leader on the Clergy Collective and I greatly his leadership and involvement.
- **Social Action Conversations** – I have convened/participated in a number of social action conversations. On Jan 15, 2023, I led a service about white privilege which was followed by a conversation in the sanctuary about racial justice ministry. I also attended a follow-up conversation about Bryan Stevenson's talk at UVA, for which our congregation served as a community partner. I convened conversations about environmental ministry and food ministry and had a very preliminary conversation with Circe Strauss about LGBTQIA ministry, which led to our congregation hosting a trans health panel discussion co-sponsored by UVA medical and the local chapter of PFLAG. These are the kinds of events I hope our congregation will host more of in the future and hosting them is the epitome of what it means to be a "safe space."
- **Milestones** – We had so much to celebrate this year, from sharing our love and appreciation for Rev. Leia's thirty years of service to UUCville and dedicating the sign on Rugby Road with our new name to celebrating the congregation's 80th anniversary with a special service and ceremony on April 16, 2023. I cannot begin to do justice to all the good feeling in the air at UUCville and my hope is that we keep celebrating the blessings of this spiritual community and that we keep having fun and parties as often as possible.
- **Rites of Passage** – Rev. Leia and I worked out a plan for weddings and memorial services in which she will handle requests for weddings and I will be the first contact for memorial services. I officiated at one memorial service this year, for Tom Crowell. Rev. Leia and I dedicated four children on May 14, 2023 - Paxton Blackwell, Roman Blackwell, Liam Leonard, and Seamus Leonard. I also want to thank our colleague, Rev. Susan Karlson, for her support as a holiday worship leader and wedding officiant.
- **Looking Ahead** – I am excited to begin a new congregational year in September. I am anticipating that a strategic plan inspired by our new mission will be a large point of emphasis. I also think we will begin to see more concrete action in the community in terms of partnerships and justice work. The future is so bright and I can't wait to see where we go from here!

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Tim Temerson